THE CASE OF Thomas Violet Citizen AND GOLDSMITH OF LONDON,

Before the Honourable Committee of PARLIAMENT, for Regulating the abuſes in making Gold and Silver Wyre, and Lace.

Humbly Sheweth,

THat, in *January* 1634. the Wardens and ſome of the Company of Goldſmiths, petitioned the Late King *CHARLES* of bleſſed memory, and His Privie Councel, touching the detriment which aroſe by the undue practices of the Gold Refiners and Wiredrawers in the unlawfull conſumption of a great Maſſe of Silver made yearly into Wire for Gold and Silver Lace and Thread, *&c.*

The Lords of His Majeſties Privie Councel Ordered them to attend the Attorney General, to the end the Stat. of *H.* the 7. made againſt the ſame abuſes might be put in execution.

There being a complaint of many abuſes in ſelling and making Gold and Silver Lace; the King commanded me and ſom others, to buy up ſmall parcells of Gold and Silver Lace, Spangles, Wire, and to aſſay the ſame.

Mr

Mr. *Alexander Jackſon* the ſworne Aſſay Maſter of Goldſmiths-hall, made ſeveral aſſaies of one hundred and twelve parcels of Gold and Silver Lace, Wire, Thread, Spangles, &c. holding in copper 4 ounces and above in a pound *Troy*, ſom 6d. 3d. and 2d. the ounce *Troy*, reported by the ſaid Mr. *Jackſon* to be ſo much worſe then Sterling; this was bought in ſeveral ſhops in *London*; Which Offendors ought to have been puniſhed according to the Statute aforeſaid, or by Indictment on another Statute which condemns the Offendors to ſuffer corporal puniſhment, and ſtand in the Pillory; your Petitioner hath cauſed ſeveral Offendors to be Indicted, and ſom ſet in the Pillory, and twenty men to run away for making courſe Silver Lace, Wire, Thread, &c.

That his ſaid late Majeſtie, and his Privie Councel, commanded your Petitioner to look after the ſaid abuſes; whereupon your Petitioner cauſed Alderman *Gibs*, *Wollaſton*, *Patrickſon*, and ſome Wiredrawers to be proſecuted in the Star-Chamber for the abuſes aforeſaid. And the ſaid Alderman *Gibs*, *Wollaſton*, and ſome others compounded for their offences, and ſued out their pardons under the Seal of *England*, as appears in Record, which coſt them dear.

That, *Anno* 1635. the Refiners and Wiredrawers petitioned his ſaid Majeſtie for a Corporation, ſetting forth the great abuſes for want of Government. But his ſaid Majeſtie and Privie Councel after many daies examination at the Councel Table, the King and all the Lords of the Councel taking notice that the Gold Wiredrawers had made their Corporation granted them *Anno* 1619. a cloak to deceive the buyers and wearers of gold and ſilver lace ſo notoriouſly, that in the latter end of King *James*'s Reign, *Giles Monperſon*, and *Francis Michel*, Knights, were degraded in Parliament, and committed to priſon for procuring a Corporation of King *James* for the Wiredrawers of gold and ſilver thread, the Refiners being therein equally concerned; The ſaid late KING *CHARLES* the Firſt 1635. refuſed to grant them a Corporation; which your Petitioner humbly referrs to the Records of Parliament about the year 1619. where it at large appeareth. The King, and Lords of the Councel, remembred all the cheats of the Corporation, was preſented to them in the Lords Houſe in Parliament, and how they made the ſilver wire with a core of copper, and heavy died ſilk, and all their manufactures adulterated, both thread, ſpangles, wire, &c. the principal of the Corporation was found the principal offendors: Sir *Giles Monperſons* broke the priſon and run away about this buſineſſe.

That his ſaid late Majeſty, *Carolo. primo* and his Privie Councel, taking eſpecial notice of your Petitioners activitie and abilitie to diſcover and reforme the abuſes aforeſaid; and that by order of the King and His Councel, your Petitioner cauſed the Tranſporters of gold and ſilver to be fined twentie four thouſand one hundred pounds in the Star Chamber, which coſt your Petitioner nineteen hundred and ſixtie pounds, which His Majeſtie promiſed to pay me but in lieu thereof, and upon paying by your Petitioner to the Lord Treaſurer, the Lord *Cottington*, Mr. Secretary *Cooke*, and Mr. Attorney General *Banckes*, the valew of one thouſand five hundred pounds: The ſaid late King *CHARLES* the Firſt of bleſſed memory, by His Letters Patents bearing date the 7. day of *September* in

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in the 14. year of his ſaid Reign, did grant to your Petitioner the Office for rectifying the abuſes aforeſaid for three lives, whereof your Petitioner and one other are yet in being; as by the Coppy of the Record exemplyfied under the Great Seal appeareth, which I here humbly preſent.

That, His ſaid late Majeſtie intending the abſolute ſettlement of the office, for rectifying of the ſaid abuſes, by reaſon of the great ſervice your Petitioner had done his Maieſtie, (amongſt other things in the ſaid Letters Pattents conteined, is graciouſly pleaſed to confirm the ſaid Office on your Petitioner, notwithſtanding his ſaid late Majeſtie, His Heirs, or Succeſſors, ſhould at any time afterwards publiſh or make any other Proclamation, Commiſſion, or Inſtructions to alter the ſaid Letters Patents. *Vide* the coppy of the Letters Patents, *Folio* 37. 38. 39.

That, your Petitioner did for above five years execute and keep the ſaid Office, the due execution of all and every the matters in the ſaid Letters Patents conteined, on the part and behalf of your Petitioner to be done and performed immediately after the ſaid Petitioner received the ſaid Letters Patents, and according to the ſaid Letters Pattents did give eleven Bonds to His Majeſties uſe for performance of the ſaid Letters Patents, *Viz.* One Bond of the penalty of one thouſand five hundred pounds, wherein your Petitioner ſtands ſingly bound; and ten other Bonds wherein ten other ſufficient perſons ſtand ſeverally bound for your Petitioners true performance of the ſaid Letters Patents in two hundred pounds a piece, as by the Records, remaining in the Kings Majeſties Remembrancers, appeareth.

That your Petitioner, by the occaſion of the late unhappy troubles, hath not made any beneſit of his ſaid Letters Pattents, being under ſequeſtration; and is by His Councel infirmed that your Petitioners Letters Patents cannot fully take effect, unleſs confirmed by Act of Parliament.

He therefore (the premiſes tenderly conſidered) humbly prayeth, That his ſaid Letters Patents may by the Act and Favour of this preſent Parliament be Ratified and Confirmed with ſuch Orders and Powers as in Juſtice you think fit, in conſideration of his right: And alſo in conſideration of his great loſſes, impriſonments, hazards for his Majeſty and His Royal Father, to his damage above twenty thouſand pounds, as he hath proved it by the Teſtimonies of many Witneſſes of honour, eſtates, and credit, and all of them the Kings ſuffering Servants.

And as in duty bound ſhall pray, &c.

THOMAS VIOLET.

Several Reaſons humbly preſented to the Honourable Committee of Parliament, concerning the Gold and Silver Wyer-drawers, by Thomas Violet *of* London, *Goldſmith. And againſt the confirming by Act of Parliament, a Patent obtained from his Majeſty about the 2. of* Oct. *in the 13. year of his Majeſties Reign, for Letters Patents to be paſſed, to incorporate the Trades of Refiners of Gold and Silver, and the Gold and Silver Wyer-drawers,* &c.

1. THat *Henry Smith* Eſq; may be ordered to bring in to the Honourable Committee the Letters Patents granted to the ſaid Society, or Corporation of Wyer-drawers, in *Octob.* laſt, that ſo your Honours may ſee what you grant by Act of Parliament, and what they deſire: and your Petitioner may have a copy of the ſaid Patent, to object againſt the legality of it, to put in his juſt exceptions thereunto to this Honourable Committee.

2. And liberty to produce to your Honours his Majeſties Royal Fathers Grant under the Great Seal, to mee of the ſaid Office, dated 7. *Sept.* 14. *Carol. primo.* for the regulating all theſe abuſes.

3. Thereupon your Honours may ſee my right in Law, and do me Iuſtice, according to Right and Equity, that ſo my Patent may be approved on, and confirmed by Parliament, I being the firſt that diſcovered all the Gold-Refiners and Wyer-drawers abuſes, 1635. to King *Charles* the Firſt, and his Privy Councel, and for five yeares kept them in ſuch order, that all theſe Manufactures of Gold and Silver wyer and thred, was made as the Plate or money of the Kingdome, and I will by Gods aſſiſtance reduce them to the ſame order again.

4. Whereas now there is nothing but diſorder and deceit in the making all theſe manufactures, neither hath *Henry Nevel* skill to mend theſe abuſes; it is a trick of the Wyer-drawers, to abuſe the Kingdome as they

they did formerly, to procure a Corporation by Act of Parliament, to cozen the Kingdome.

5. Upon view of my Patent under the Great Seal, your Honours will see his now Majesty hath been mis-informed, and abused in his Grant; for I have all the power granted twenty four yeares ago, under the Great Seal of *England*, and I humbly hope having suffered twenty thousand pounds losse and eight yeares imprisonment, being robbed of almost all I have in the world, I shall not after all my Troubles be flayed alive by *Henry Nevel* Esq; of my office, which I executed for five years, and know as well how to regulate these trades, and every branch thereof, as any man in *England*. Indeed the Gold wyer-drawers think I know too much for them, and therefore they desire *Nevel Smith* Esq; who they can lead by the nose, by reason of his ignorance in this businesse, who hath unduely obtained the Kings Patent.

6. Mr. *Nevel* is like Dean *Murrey* in King *James's* time, he loved to get into Church livings, but could not preach; *Nevel Smith* loves to get my office for nothing, which is worth about one thousand pounds a year, so much for several yeares I made of it, and cost mee above three thousand four hundred pound to his late Majesty, and great Officers of State.

7. There is in this act a power that *Henry Nevel*, his Executors, and Administrators, shall Assay all silver, and all silver shall be brought to one place, and to take Constables, and seize all gold and silver lace, which he, his Executors, &c. shall find to be courl silver. Surely this Gentleman hath been a Goldsmith or a Refiner, that so great a skill and trust must be placed in his hands, when we find him altogether ignorant in every branch of this profession. After-ages will not believe so much ignorance and confidence to be in a person of quality, to pretend to that he doth not understand: nor I believe his Executors nor Administrators, to take away my right. I beseech your Honours observe.

8. If the Goldsmiths that go to the mint with their gold or silver to coyne, should be their own assay-masters, the Kings money would hardly be standard: if the silver-workers made assay of their own plate, no wise man will think it would be sterling. These Wyer-drawers are now at their own wills to make their silver at what fineneſse they please, put in as much silk to silver as they please; they have melted down all the heavy money in the Kingdom, to the great ruine of the Kingdom; they hinder the Kings Mint by out-buying the same: and should they now get this Corporation, and have an ignorant governour, that is no Artist, as *Henry Nevel* Esq; labours to obtain, whereas formerly they committed

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one fraud, they will by authority of Parliament, be out of the gun-shot of the law.

9. The Wiredrawers are angry with me because I have formerly strictly tied them to make good gold and silver wire, and thread; if they work according to the Law I cannot hurt them, but if they abuse the Kingdom in slight and base Manufactures, my security and my self must make it good, we are bound in the Exchequer to do it; and therefore I have, and shall prevent them to my power. They would have Mr. *Nevil* in my place that hath no skill, and then they would cozen the Kingdome as some of them have done formerly; by this act of Parliament, the Wardens and Assistants have the power to do what they list; Mr. *Nevil* is but named as a cypher to get their Charter by his Friends.

Your Petitioners humble prayer is, that by your Honours Justice for his Majesties service, this Manufacture be put under some strict Rule and Order, and that nothing may passe under your Honours hands that may preiudice your Petitioners Grant which he hath under the great Seal of *England*, for the regulating the said Manufacture.

I have humbly to recommend to your Honours great wisdom, the due consideration of these several following heads, and humbly leav them at your *Honours* feet; and though they may not please the Wire-drawers, yet I am sure they be for his Maiesties service. It is true, there is twenty thousand soul's in *London*, live, and have dependance on this Manufacture, and that made King *Iames* and King *Charles* suffer this Manufacture to be made here.

It is worthy of consideration, the great damage his Maiesty sustains in the losse of his Customs, the losse and preiudice of his Maiesties Mint, by suffering the silver after it is imported into this Kingdom, to be made into Silver Lace, &c. to be diverted from Coine, which would pay a duty of coynage, and augment the stock of the Kingdome, which is now converted into this Manufacture: the valew imployed in Gold and Silver yearly, is about one hundred thousand pounds a year in Gold and silver Lace, Wire, &c. which was it converted into coine every year, and so passed between men, would drive a million for commodities a year in Trade, to the great improvement of the Kingdome by Commerce and Trade.

That upon calculation it will be found, the King in point of Customs his losses about ten thousand pounds a year, by suffering this Manufacture to be made in *England*, as will appear upon calculation of his Maiesties Book of Rates of his Customes. I humblie pray the book of Rates at the Custom-house may be viewed by your Honours, to see when the gold and silver thread payes.

That as this day by this Corporation there is no Excise laid on this commoditie, which under favour, humbly submitting to your great wisdomes, is a commoditie may bear an Excise as well, and better, than almost any thing in the King-

Kingdome: gold and ſilver Lace is a ſuperfluitie, and it is the wearers payes the Exciſe, not the Silkmen, Wiredrawers, or other Tradeſmen: this Trade his Maieſty doth allow in favour of the poor women Spinners, and other poor people, that are above twenty thouſand ſouls, who onely have their livelyhood from this Manufacture, or elſe for the reaſons aforeſaid, it would not be allowed to be wrought in *England*; for as it is now made for this laſt twenty years, all the heavie currant ſilver is melted down to make this Manufacturie.

I humbly pray this offence may by Act of Parliament be made Felonie, and the ſame puniſhment for tranſporting gold and ſilver without the Kings licence, if this be not done, in a ſhort time there will neither gold nor ſilver be left in the Kingdom, all the gold in a manner is already gone, and the ſilver follows apace.

Therefore my humble Petition to your Honours is, that your Honours ſettle ſuch an exciſe on this Manufacture, at the leaſt two pence in the Ounce *Troy*, being ſo much as his Maieſty loſeth in the coynage of the ſame, to be approved and confirmed by the Parliament, for and towards his Maieſties loſſe in his Cuſtomes, and in his coynage, by ſuffering this Manufacture to be wrought in *England*; the Cuſtomes is above three times as much.

That your Honours would Order for the future, that no inferiour perſons, as ſervant-Maids, and other mechanick people, ſhall wear gold or ſilver Lace, it being an abuſe to perſons of honour, men and women, to have mechanick people and ſervants to wear gold and ſilver Lace; many ſervant Maids of four pound a year, do lay out half of it in gold and ſilver Lace, which cauſes many great inconveniences by vanity to come to them, by lewd courſes to ſteal and pilfer their Maſters moneys.

10. If Mr. *Nevel* be confirmed by Parliament, to be the head Officer to aſſay and ſeal all gold and ſilver, if his ignorance in this office ſhould ever be complained of to his Majeſty or the Privy Councel, he muſt be expelled by the ſame power that put him in; by order of Parliament to be put down.

11. The aſſay-maſter of the Tower is upon his oath, the aſſay-maſter of Goldſmiths Hall is upon his oath: this act of Parliament appoints *Henry Nevel* to be aſſay-maſter, and to ſeize all adulterate gold and ſilver wyer, and *Henry Nevel* knowes not how to make an aſſay of gold or ſilver, nor knowes not when he ſees courſe ſilver from fine, this manufacture will be well aſſayed by a Gentleman that is not an Artiſt in ſilver thred, wyer, or lace, how can he ſwear by another mans skill.

12. Ignorant officers in places of great skill and truſt, which muſt be executed on oath, is that that abuſes the King and Kingdome: this Gentleman is ignorant in every branch of the trade, yet by this Act of Parliament, is to have an *ob.* the ounce *Troy* for ſilver wyer, 2 *d.* the ounce

Troy

Troy for silver foliat, 1 *d.* the pound *Haverdupois* for all copper wyer disgrosse'd, and one moiety of all seizures and forfeitures: a place I payed 3400 *l.* for, and Mr. *Nevil* would have it for nothing.

13. And now after all my losses and sufferings, this Gentleman pretends to my place, and if your Honours read my Patent and his, you will find I am the elder brother in my grant by above twenty yeares. And I humbly hope my experience to execute this place, shall be a barr to his ignorance. It is the fleece Mr. *Nevel* looks after, not the flock, the fees, not the regulating the abuse; he can tell how to take and receive his fees, but knows not how to regulate the abuses in this trade, nor to any part of the mystery, which not well regulated, is a mystery of iniquity.

And if you please to observe the Act of Parliament under examination, the whole power of regulating this manufacture is lodged in the Master, Wardens, and Assistants of the Corporation of Wyer-drawers, and *Henry Nevel* Esq; is but held forth as a property, by his friends, and power to get the Wyer-drawers by Act of Parliament a Corporation, the power is in the Wardens and Assistants.

And then they will serve the Kingdome as the Silk-men did, when they got their Corporation about 1634. the Wardens and Assistants of Silk-men were found to be the only men that cozen'd the King & Kingdome in heavy dyed silk, as was proved 1634. which caused the King to damn their Patent, and fine the offenders in Star-Chamber, many thousand pounds. And so it was proved in Parliament 1619. Sir *Giles Monparsons*, and the Wardens and Assistants of the Gold wyer-drawers, cozened the Kingdome in selling adulterate silver thread and wyer, for good. The sentence of Sir *Giles Monparsons*, and the cheats of the Wyer-drawers proved in Parliament, was so famous, that they made Ballads, songs, and pictures of the discovery of these abuses, and *Monparsons* running away about this businesse. This was the end of the Gold wyer-drawers Corporation in Parliament, about 1619. as many hundreds of people in *London* can witnesse, the like Project Mr. *Nevel* now desires.

May it please your Honours, to make an Act to settle the power on his Majesty, and any six of the Privy Councel from time to time to make such Commissions and Orders, as they in their great Wisdoms shall think fit, to regulate the Traders, and reforme the abuses, with a power to commit and punish the Offendors; and to impose such sums of mony upon the Manufacture, for, and towards the losse his Majestie sustains in his Customes, as his Majesty and his Privy Councel shall think fit, not exceeding 2*d.* *the ounce* Troy *for all silver wyre disgrossed, and the fees already allowed by Patent to your* Petitioner *for warranting the same to be made all of good silver wyre, not under Sterling, nor to draw no silver for any of these Manufactures before it be duly Assayed and Registred; and a due accompt given to his* Majestie. *This is a sure way to regulate all these abuses, without which the Wiredrawer cannot possibly among themselves be kept in any order, being a great many necessitated people, which without power will not be kept in compass, being in number above* 15. *thousand that have a livelyhood by this* Manufacture; *the Corporation the Wyredrawers now desire, will be as the former was* 1619. *if the King and his Privy Councel have not the power and ordering thereof by Act of* Parliament *to reforme all the aforesaid abuses, and punish the Offendors; What the* KING *commands I will see duly observed.*

FINIS.